

Lawrence, Sharon

From: Denise Williams [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, July 20, 2022 10:36 PM
To: Luzerne County Council Meeting Public Comments; Lawrence, Sharon
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Public Comment for July 26, 2022 Voting Session Non-Agenda Item Public Comment Time

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Request to be read into Non-Agenda Items Public Comment Time during Tuesday, July 26, 2022 County Council Voting Session Meeting

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in regards to the Wednesday, July 20, 2022 Citizen's Voice article, "County Council Mulls Proposed Amendments to Home Charter Rule". In this article it states, "Councilman Urban objected to 'reverse age discrimination' in connection to the charter provision regarding the county board of elections." (requirement of being a member of the same political party for five years prior to appointment by Council). It also quotes Councilman Urban as saying, "That unfairly prevents people aged 18-22 from serving on the Board."

I disagree that this is unfair. Calling it "reverse age discrimination" is a real stretch.

I, as a voting citizen of Luzerne County, am extremely grateful for the wisdom of the Charter framers for including this qualification provision.

One must ask why they put this provision in.

Requiring the council appointed Board members (2 Dem & 2 Rep) to be of the same political party continually for five years shows proof/validation of a long term commitment to the party they are registered with and applying to represent. It also shows that the voter has at least five years of experience with voting. These are qualities that I want in those appointed by the County Council to the role of overseeing the county election process. This five year "guardrail" helps to validate an applicant's party affiliation. Coupled with the application and public interview, the public is given additional assurances as to the applicant's "true" party affiliation.

There is more to this than meets the eye.

What if the five year requirement is removed for the 18-22 year old group? What would prevent a person from this age group from registering to vote based on the party of the next opening on the Board? E.g. The next opening is for a Republican. A person who is really a Democrat registers or changes party affiliation as/to a Republican in order to apply for and "sway the board" toward their partisan leanings. This person ends up being appointed by Council to a Board that has two Dems and two Republicans. On its face it appears to now have three Republicans and two Democrats appointed by Council. In reality, it may be the ideology of three Democrats and two Republicans. (Personally, I am of the belief that all Election Board members should base

their decisions or perform their role through a lens of non-partisanship, but, that may not be everyone's philosophy.)

You may say, well, that can happen even with the five year requirement. That certainly is a possibility. I guess there may be a person who is willing to go that far (think five years ahead) and limit their Primary Election voting abilities to that extent. I think that would be "far-fetched", but there is no controlling that possibility.

This 5 year rule prevents anyone, from any age, from registering to vote or changing party affiliation in order to be the party affiliation needed for the next appointed Board of Elections seat. Again, I must say, I am grateful for the Home Rule Charter framers' wisdom.

The public may not be aware of these dynamics. It is up to you, their elected representatives, to represent their "best interests" in the awareness of the intricacies of this issue. That's what they elected you for.

I would also suggest (prior to any vote on putting this to a ballot amendment) that you don't take my word for this. Please speak with some of the "framers" and ask them their thoughts on what I have shared and if any of these factors came into play when they made their decision for this provision.

Sincerely,

Denise Williams
Shavertown, PA

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